



# FACTS AND FICTION ABOUT DIET AND CANCER

No foods have actually been proven to cause – or cure – breast cancer. Still, certain parts of your diet may be linked to cancer. Can you separate fact from fiction?

## Fact

- While sugar and fat – including trans fat – don't directly cause cancer, they do cause obesity. And obesity is a huge risk factor for numerous types of cancer, including breast cancer.
- Excessive alcohol consumption increases the risk of breast cancer. Combining smoking and drinking has additional cancer risks. People who continue to drink alcohol should limit their intake – no more than one drink each day. Twelve ounces of beer, five ounces of wine, or one 1.5 oz. shot of 80-proof liquor – each count as one drink.
- Studies are underway to link certain food components to breast cancer risk, but to date, these are not conclusive.

## Fiction

According to the American Cancer Society, none of the following items have shown any specific link to cancer:

- **Artificial sweeteners** – Sweeteners like aspartame or saccharin.
- **Bioengineered foods** – Foods that are made by adding genes to a plant to make it hardier or more productive.
- **Cholesterol** – High cholesterol will put you at high risk for heart disease, but not necessarily for cancer.
- **Coffee and caffeine** – Caffeine may increase benign breast lumps but not breast cancer.
- **Food additives** – Additives used to enhance a food's color or flavor.
- **Fluorides** – Extensive research has found that fluorides pose no threat for cancer.
- **Olive oil** – This substitute for butter has a reduced risk of heart disease, and it doesn't appear to increase the risk for cancer.
- **Cell phones, underwire bras, or personal hygiene products** – There's no relationship between these and cancer.

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## Prevention is the key

### Food Choices

The American Cancer Society's nutrition recommendations include:

- A healthy diet, with an emphasis on plant sources.
- Food or beverages in amounts that help achieve and maintain a healthy weight.  
*Drinking eight cups of water each day is a great way to stay healthy.*
- Five or more servings of a variety of vegetables and fruits every day. With the exception of beta-carotene, antioxidants from fruits and vegetables are known to be healthy for you and prevent different types of cancer. Eating foods with antioxidants is preferable to taking supplements and is the best way to reduce your cancer risk.
- Whole grains instead of processed grains.
- Limited consumption of processed and red meats.

Overall, if you maintain a healthy, balanced diet, you may lower your risk of breast cancer. The key word here is “balanced.” Even vitamins that appear to reduce the risk of cancer can have negative effects if you take too many supplements. Keeping your food healthy and varied will help keep you healthy, too.

### Lifestyle choices

Research suggests that losing weight can lower your cancer risk. Obesity is also linked with many other health problems. Staying physically active and eating a healthy diet will possibly lower your cancer risk and reduce the risk of other chronic diseases that could hurt you.

### Source:

American Cancer Society: [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

### Source for myths:

[www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED\\_3\\_2X\\_Common\\_Questions\\_About\\_Diet\\_and\\_Cancer.asp?sitearea=PED](http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_3_2X_Common_Questions_About_Diet_and_Cancer.asp?sitearea=PED)

[www.cancer.org/docroot/COM/content/div\\_Eastern/COM\\_1\\_1x\\_4\\_Most\\_Common\\_Cancer\\_Myths.asp?sitearea=COM](http://www.cancer.org/docroot/COM/content/div_Eastern/COM_1_1x_4_Most_Common_Cancer_Myths.asp?sitearea=COM)